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A D V I C E

TO

YOUNG PEOPLE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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DISCOURSE, &c.

MATTHEW xxi. ver. 28.

JESUS ſaid a certain man had two Sons; and he came to the firſt, and ſaid, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard; he anſwered and ſaid, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went.

AND he came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe: and he anſwered and ſaid, I go, Sir, and went not.

OUR Saviour himſelf hath applied theſe two characters to the elders of the Jews and the Publicans; the former of whom, notwithſtanding their profeſſion of greater ſanctity, and the advantages they had from their ſuperior knowledge of religion, rejected his goſpel; whilſt the latter, notwithſtanding their

former wicked lives repented and heartily embraced it.

But though the parable be thus principally applicable to thoſe who were then ſtanding before our Saviour, it may very uſefully be applied to ourſelves. The two characters may be found among thoſe who live under the goſpel of Chriſt; as there are thoſe, who after a courſe of wickedneſs, in which they have rejected the ordinary calls to religion, have repented at laſt, and become good men; whilſt others, notwithſtanding their profeſſion of chriſtianity, and the ſuperior advantages they enjoy for the practice of it, grow at firſt indifferent in their uſe, and afterwards profligate in their abuſe of it.

Our Saviour has determined which of the two are the better, and will fare the better: and has left a leſſon of comfort to the repentant ſinner, and of warning to thoſe, who under a knowledge of chriſtianity, and with advantages about them, which heighten their obligations of living anſwerable to it, yet, like the ſon in the parable, neglect it, and turn reprobate.

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There is a *general obligation*, incumbent on all who profeſs a chriſtian faith, to live anſwerably to ſuch profeſſion. But this general obligation may derive additional ſtrength from *particular* circumſtances belonging to our condition in life. There is great variety in the conditions of men, and not leſs in the *endowments* and *advantages* they feel. Theſe are circumſtances, which becauſe they may *enlarge* our duty, as they *better enable* us to perform it, ſo will proportionably encreaſe the general obligation we are under of living anſwerable to our chriſtian profeſſion.

One advantage of condition, which moſt of us feel, but which many are very apt to neglect, is that of a *good education*.

We are *called* very early into Chriſt's vineyard, and very ſoon do we *promiſe to go there*.

This is done at our baptiſm. After which, by the care that is taken of our education, we are *taught (as ſoon as we are able to learn) what a ſolemn vow, promiſe and profeſſion we have there made*

made of following and obeying Chriſt. We are taught to entertain a faith in Chriſt's divine authority; are ſhewn the precepts by which he has directed us to live; and are made ſenſible of the important conſequences which will attend our neglect or our regard for thoſe precepts.

As reaſon gradually gathers ſtrength within us, we learn to *underſtand* what has been ſet before us, and we *confirm in our own minds* that profeſſion into which we have been led by the care and inſtruction of others.

Thus furniſhed we ſtep forth into the world, where we are ſoon put to the trial of our conſtancy, in acting up to a profeſſion which, we have not only been *taught*, but, by our natural and expreſs approbation of it, have *voluntarily taken up*.

As many as feel themſelves in ſuch ſituation at their entrance upon the world, ſtand full in the character of the ſon who hath received his father's call to go into the vineyard, and hath readily given him his promiſe—*I go, Sir.* And

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in a chriſtian country, and under a chriſtian government, it ſhould reaſonably be hoped that this is the *general* ſituation of young perſons. And yet 'tis not ſo general *among us* as it ſhould be. There are too many young perſons who ſtep forth into the world under ſuch principles of education, that it muſt be owned they can feel no particular weight from *them* to enforce their general obligation and profeſſion of religion and virtue.

But for thoſe who have had the bleſſing to be educated under honeſt and conſcientious parents, by whoſe early care they have been taught to know and to reliſh religion; and who have ſeen the leſſons of virtue exemplified in the conduct of thoſe from whom they heard them.—Such ſtep forth into the world under great advantages.—Their *profeſſion* of living as becometh chriſtians is *great*, and they are *greatly obliged* to anſwer it.

Yet it is too much to be lamented, that as young perſons gradually advance beyond the reach of diſcipline, they are apt to lay aſide that reſpect which is due to the authority under which

which they have been held, and to grow indifferent to the precepts and directions which that authority hath inſtilled. They are ſeized with a love and longing for *liberty*, and the firſt error in judgment they commit, is to miſtake *licentiouſneſs* for *liberty*; an error from which great numbers never recover themſelves as long as they live. The freedom of doing juſt what they pleaſe, without controul, is their notion of liberty; in conſequence of which they do not ſufficiently feel themſelves *their own maſters*, unleſs they *ſcornfully kick aſide* the authority which has hitherto controuled them, nor are they ſatisfied that they are *free agents*, till they have given themſelves a proof of it, by *chuſing* and by *following vice*.

And what now becomes of the religion of *ſuch* young people? Their duty to God has hitherto been connected with their duty to their parents, nor can they turn their backs on the latter without neglecting the former. And ſo it proves. You will meet them any where ſooner than in a *church*; you will ſee any book in their hands ſooner than the *ſcriptures*; and

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you will hear them talk of any thing ſooner than religion—*unleſs it be to ſhew their wit.*

No ſooner have they turned their backs on *God* and their *parents*, but they are met by thoſe who are ready to corrupt both their practice and their principles. The ſcriptures are laid aſide for ſuch leſſons of *virtue* and *morality* as they find in *novels* and *romances*. And if they can *talk* of what they pick up from ſuch leſſons, they think themſelves ſufficiently furniſhed with principles of morality and religion, without going to *Chriſt*'s *goſpel* for them.

And ſufficiently furniſhed they are for the taſte of theſe times; for as to the old-faſhioned character of *good chriſtians*, 'tis well nigh laid aſide; the modern faſhionable character is, the character of *good moral men:* for obtaining which, it is almoſt ſufficient to ſet at nought chriſtianity; but if beſides, upon occaſion, men can *talk handſomely* about *morality*, and if they keep clear of ſuch crimes as may hazard their neck, their title to the character, it ſeems, is indiſputable.

Perhaps leſs will ſerve—for I have ſeen a late modern piece of hiſtory in which the life of a very eminent perſon in gay life is ſet forth, and in which the writer in one chapter gives him the character of a ſtrictly moral man, and in the next gives an account of his being guilty of adultery and murder.

For ſuch inſtructions and ſuch company, do many young people turn their backs on their parents, and the principles of a good education; and very ſoon are they engaged in the fatal change of virtue for vice, of religion for infidelity, or an empty romantic morality. They are in haſte to exchange the ſcenes of ſober improvement at home, for gayer ſcenes of pleaſure and licentiouſneſs abroad. And (what helps them forward in their folly) that natural ſhame which ſhould reſtrain them from making ſuch a change, is eaſily overcome by the encouragement they feel around them. Places of diverſion are open to receive them, and they are *invited* to be idle and extravagant. Gaming is become a qualification, without which they are ſcarce fit for any company, and the more they

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have of it, the more fit they are for what is called the beſt company; and the nearer they imitate men, as they are called, of the beſt figure. Is it likely now that inconſiderate young people ſhould feel any *ſhame* at their firſt entrance upon ſuch ſplendid liſts of vanity and vice? Is it to be expected, that when they have turned their backs on God and their parents, they ſhould not run where they are ſo *powerfully* called?

And what is the conſequence of all this? Thoſe whoſe great examples draw young people thus far to be *polite*, would do a kind thing to point out to them the conſequence, which lies not far behind it, of being *miſerable*.

But ſo long as their own great fortunes will bear ſuch people up, they care not how many they ſeduce to ruin theirs, and being hardened againſt feeling the diſſipation of their own virtue and religion, they are not ſenſible of a motive for cautioning others to preſerve theirs. In ſhort, they are not likely to deſtroy the effect of their bad example by giving any good advice.

But young people may ſee for themſelves, if they will, the fatal conſequence of ſuch faſhionable politeneſs. They may ſee numbers led by theſe principles, through extravagance and debauchery to ruin, which wears indeed variety of faces around us, but all too terrible not to alarm others of what they are doing, when they careleſly or contemptuouſly part with the advantages of a good education.

Some of theſe *moral men* pine out the wretched remains of life in infamy, others moulder away by diſeaſes, ſome grow outrageous, and murder others, or deſperate, and murder themſelves.—Theſe are the conſequences of being indifferent in the uſe of thoſe advantages, with which a good education has furniſhed young people at their entrance upon the world—the guilt as well as the miſchief of which conſequences *is all their own.* Their parents have performed their duty, and ſhall meet with their reward for endeavouring to make them good, whilſt they alone ſhall meet the juſt, though ſevere puniſhment for making themſelves wicked.

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Let me then earneſtly warn them to be exceedingly jealous in the preſervation of them, and diligent in the application and improvement of them; and ſeriouſly to conſider how much, on this account, they owe to God, their parents, and themſelves.

I. If a good education be a *bleſſing*, as ſure it is; if virtue and religion be our *duty*, and if the happineſs of heaven be our *reward*, they muſt be ſenſible that ſome return is due for it to *God*, from whom they derive that bleſſing. It is owing to his goodneſs that they are placed within the influence of it. They could not chuſe their own entrance into life, but God has appointed it for them, and if he has appointed that their firſt ſteps into life ſhould be the very ſteps which lead directly to religion and happineſs, they can think no otherwiſe than that it is as much their duty *to go forward*, as it was God's goodneſs that *placed them* where they are; and that the former is the only gratitude they can pay for the latter. If it be a duty *at all times* to obey the call of God, ſurely the greater the call, and the earlier it is given, the greater muſt be the duty of obeying

ing it: and what greater call can we receive from God than when he calls us to *ſalvation*, or what more early, than when he calls us from the very moment of our *birth?*

Young people are very able to give attention to this reflection, if they will ſet their minds to it; and it may not a little help them, to obſerve the many inſtances around them, where God has thought fit to deny that bleſſing which he has granted to them, and in proportion as they learn to pity the condition of others, let them learn to value their own. They may aſk themſelves the obvious queſtion, why God has ſhewn himſelf more indulgent to them than to many others? And as they muſt be ſenſible this cannot be intended as any reward for paſt merit, whilſt they had none to ſhew, ſo it muſt be intended as a motive for producing as much future merit as the advantages they enjoy are ſuited to procure.

They do not receive the moſt ordinary favour from their parents, but they are ſenſible that their duty of gratitude for it is beſt ſhewn in a proper

proper uſe of it; and ſo long as they look upon the advantages of their education as a bleſſing from God, they cannot be inſenſible (they ſhould perpetually conſider) that it is their beſt and moſt indiſpenſible duty of gratitude to make a proper uſe of ſuch bleſſing, and to apply the advantages of a good education for producing a good life.

II. Beſides conſidering what they owe to God, let young people, who are bleſſed with a good education, well conſider how much they owe to *their parents*. 'Tis owing to the early care which their parents have taken of their childhood, that they are enabled to take care of themſelves in their manhood, and that their work of duty lies *ſo eaſily* before them as it does. To their vigilance and pains it is owing that they are yet unincumbered with vice, and that the natural bias of their minds as yet inclines to virtue.

Their parents have not only *pointed out* to them, but have actually *ſet them forward* in the path, in which they may be good, and may be happy: vice and danger lies behind them if they

they will but preſs forward as they have ſet out, and to be wicked and to be miſerable, they muſt wilfully turn back, and renounce the directions they have received.

They ſhould reflect that all this care of their parents, all the anxiety they have felt, and the pains they have taken, naturally claims at leaſt the return of comfort for their anxiety, and ſatisfaction for their pains: even conſidering their education only as the *work of their* parents—for why ſhould children interpoſe to diſappoint their parents work?—they ought ſurely to promote it upon the principle of *common duty*. But when this which has been the work of their parents, has been a work directed to procure *their* happineſs, the obligation is invincible that they ought to contribute their own care in *promoting* it; not only upon the principle of *common duty*, nor indeed merely out of *regard to themſelves*, but upon a farther principle of *gratitude*. What is it then when young people *take pains* to *fruſtrate* ſuch a work, when they *deride* the pains their parents have been taking for their happineſs,

neſs, and wilfully ſeek deſtruction? What is it but to *lay miſery* to the tender anxiety of parents, inſtead of repaying it with comfort, and to heap anguiſh upon their care, inſtead of rewarding it with ſatisfaction? What is it but to make thoſe bowels *bleed*, which have ſo often *yearned*, and to *bring down their grey hairs with ſorrow to the grave*.

III. Laſtly, after ſeriouſly conſidering what they owe to God and to their parents, let young people who are bleſſed with a good education well reflect how much they owe themſelves.

They have *largely promiſed* to be good—their preſent ſenſe of their duty, their preſent practice of it, their preſent reliſh for it, are circumſtances which ſtrictly engage them to future obedience, as they fully ſhew their knowledge and ability for performing it; let them then be exceeding jealous in the preſervation of ſuch principles, fully aſſured, as they may be, that they will live to want them, and that it will require all their care to keep them.

The ſafeſt paths in life are beſet with dangers which threaten our virtue and religion, and there are few companies in which a young man may venture himſelf without being cloſely armed with the principles of a good education. Artful inſinuations to the diſcredit and prejudice of religion, and ſpecious apologies for vice, will meet him in almoſt every converſation; and in proportion as he neglects to call his education to his aid, to repel ſuch poiſon, or ſets it aſide to be *conformable* to his company, he will find his paſſions gather ſtrength, vice will gradually appear leſs odious, and religion grow more cumberſome, till at length thoſe principles with which, as with a *life guard*, he ſet out from home, are contemptuouſly diſcharged as a *troubleſome* and *clumſy retinue*.

But when, inſtead of taking their education along with them, as a neceſſary defence, even in the beſt companies, young people haſtily throw them aſide to run into the worſt, they are making haſte indeed to deſtruction, which they cannot

cannot well fail to meet with, when others take not more pains to ruin them, than they take to ruin themſelves.

Such unhappy men, if they live not to regret the loſs of thoſe good principles they brought into the world with them, rove abandoned for a time, and then fall miſerable into the grave; or if they live to be tired, affrightened in the purſuit of vice, and with regret *look back* to what they were; with what difficulty will they find again thoſe principles which they ſo contemptuouſly threw away at the beginning of life, the influence of which they voluntarily turned their backs upon to *run into* the pleaſures of life; and the reflection that they once had ſuch principles will perhaps be all they will be able to find, after they have *run through* the pleaſures which have deſtroyed them.

And what can they find worſe till they meet with the judgment of God? Thoſe poor wretches whoſe *misfortune* it is to be bred in *ignorance*, and who finiſh their days as miſerably as they began

gah them, feel not that remorſe which muſt wring the hearts of thoſe, who *in the midſt of miſery reflect that happineſs was once within their reach.*

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